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# COLOUR-BLIND NEUTRALITY

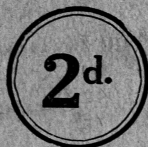
AN OPEN LETTER

TO

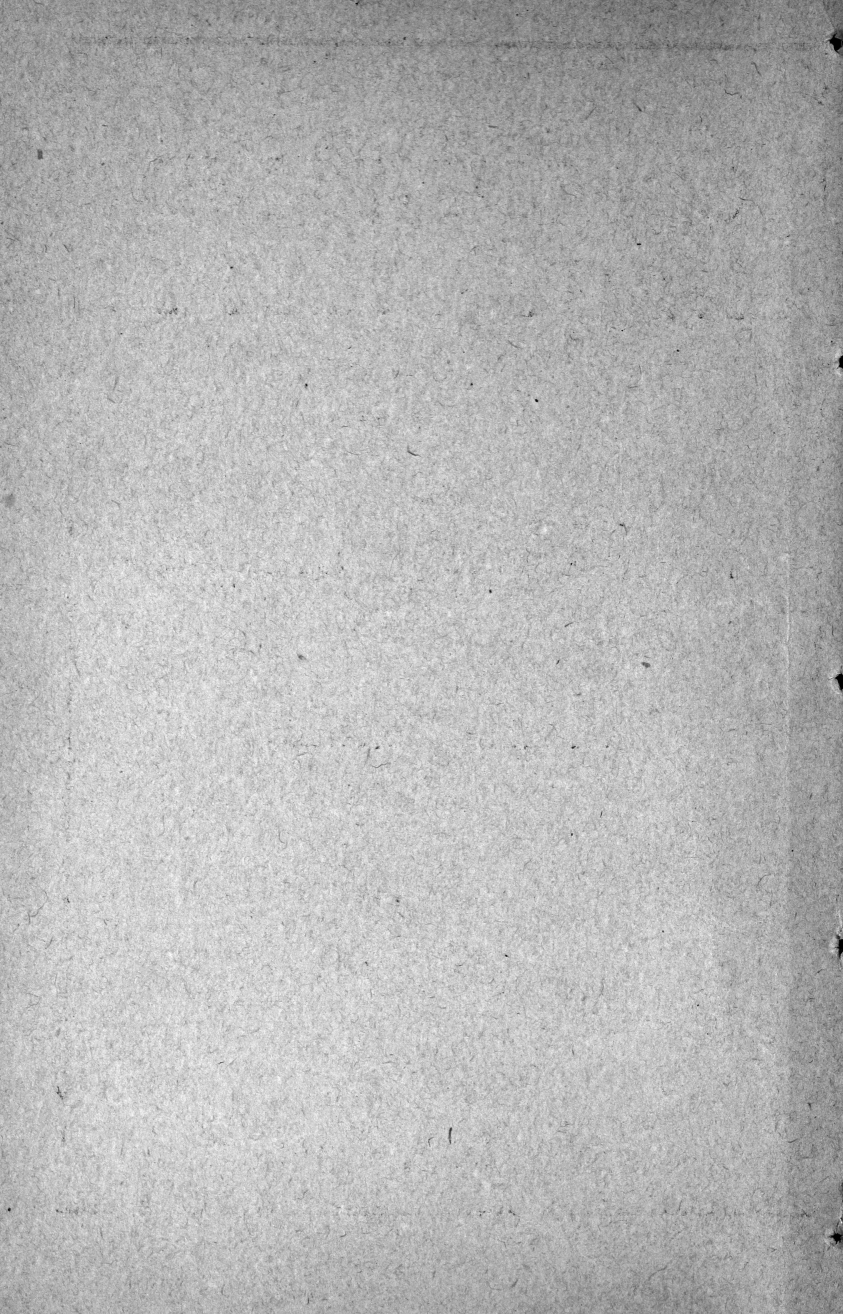
Doctor George Brandes

BY

WILLIAM ARCHER.



HODDER & STOUGHTON,  
London. New York. Toronto.  
MCMXVI.



# COLOUR-BLIND NEUTRALITY

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"Quel cattivo coro  
Degli angeli, che non furon ribelli,  
Hé fur fedeli a Dio, ma per sé foro."

*Inferno. Canto III.*

# Colour=Blind Neutrality.

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DEAR DR. BRANDES,

You have published "An Appeal" to the belligerent Powers to return to sanity and arrange terms of peace. In the abstract, such an appeal must command the sympathy of every humane and reasonable man. The incredible, the tragic lunacy of this struggle is at least as patent to us in belligerent England as it can be to anyone in neutral Denmark. Yet this "Appeal" is disappointing to your admirers and friends—if I may so style myself—inasmuch as it is not really calculated to further the beneficent end you have in view. Will you allow me to tell you why, in my judgment, it must fall on deaf ears?

Not, certainly, because we in England, or in any Allied country, are disinclined to hear you. To whose judgment should we listen more gladly? You are unquestionably the first critic of the age, and probably the leading intellect of the whole neutral world, at all events on this

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side of the Atlantic. The delicacy of your æsthetic sensibility is not more remarkable than your power of intellectual penetration and co-ordination. You are not only a scholar, but a man of the living world. You have fought a splendid fight for freedom of thought, and have expressed in no uncertain terms your detestation for political tyranny. Whose approval could have done more to encourage us? To whose considered and reasoned criticism should we have listened with greater respect?

But, as a matter of fact, you have withheld from us both these advantages. You have carried the art of neutrality to a very high pitch. You stand indifferent between truth and falsehood, between humanity and inhumanity, between right and wrong. I am almost inclined to say to you, with one who was no neutral in the fight for freedom,

Kennst du die Hölle des Dante nicht,

Die schrecklichen Terzetten?

—and then to refer you to the remarks on neutrals in the third canto of the “Inferno.”

Is it possible you do not see that this war, mad and monstrous though it be, is a war in which everything turns on the question of right and wrong?—a question not to be dismissed with a



shrug and a verdict of "Rogues all!" Your "Appeal" begins thus:

Each of the Great Powers declares that the war it is waging is a war of defence. They have all been attacked; they are all fighting for their existence. For all of them murder and lies are necessary means of defence. Then, since none of the Powers, by their own showing, wanted war, in heaven's name let them make peace!

Suppose, my dear Master, that you had taken to law instead of literature, and had become a judge: suppose that two men were brought before you, each declaring that he had been murderously assaulted by the other, and one of them unquestionably in possession of the other's watch, purse and pocket-book: should you feel that you had done all your duty demanded if you said, "They are doubtless both liars, or both hallucinated; bind them over to keep the peace, and let the one who holds the swag return (say) the watch, but keep the rest of his plunder?" Should you not consider the possibility that one of them might be telling the truth? Should you not call evidence on the point and examine it carefully? Should you not recognise some antecedent probability that the man who was cer-

tainly armed to the teeth, and certainly took the other unprepared, was the real aggressor? And should you not think that probability heightened if you found his pockets bulging with tracts which declared fighting an act of religion, and robbery under arms the chief duty of man?

NEUTRAL ALL-TOO NEUTRAL.

“ ‘ What is truth ? ’ said jesting Pilate ”—and took up an attitude of ironic neutrality.

But in this matter there *is* a truth and there *is* a falsehood; and the merits of the present situation, as of the whole war, depend upon the question: Who is the liar? If Germany is telling the truth—if she was the victim of an unprovoked attack—then we, in carrying on the war, are merely piling crime on crime. Even in that case Germany would not be entirely justified. Nothing could excuse her invasion of Belgium, nothing could cleanse her hands of the blood of that unhappy country. But many of her other proceedings would wear a very different aspect. Much may be pardoned to a man wantonly attacked and fighting for his life, which would be unpardonable in one who was himself the aggressor. Submarine ruthlessness, indiscriminate civilian-slaying, poison gas and

liquid fire, are not pretty or chivalrous methods of warfare; but a man set upon by assassins is not to be severely censured if, in his defence, he hits below the belt. Even he, however, is not entitled to bludgeon a third party, an innocent passer-by, and one, moreover, whom he has sworn to protect.

But if the man who hits below the belt, who sticks at nothing, who resorts to every base and diabolical device he can think of, is not the attacked but the attacker, the man who willed, and planned, and executed the murderous assault, what are we to say of him? what are we to do with him? Is it to the interest of the world at large that he should get off scot-free, and be able to tell himself that his spirited policy was in some measure successful, though the fight was not quite the "frischer, fröhlicher Krieg" he had hoped for? And is it the part of a good European to be neutral not only in act but in feeling, and to urge that the bandit should be allowed to get away with his booty?

We shall fight on, my dear Master, in spite of your disapproval, because we believe that the worst thing that could happen to humanity would be the triumph of the giant Lie, and of the abominable devices of massacre which it has



called to its aid. As the world is constituted, success cannot be divested of its fascination, its prestige; and we feel that if Germany's conduct before and during the war were suffered to wear even the appearance of success, life would not be worth living in the Europe that would ensue. To avert that calamity, no expense of blood and treasure seems to us too great. I repeat that the insanity of war is at least as patent to us as to you—to us, who are not theorising on the vantage-ground of neutrality, but living through the agony, the horror, the insensate waste of it all. But the lunacy lies in attack, not in defence. Unless you are prepared to preach Tolstoyan non-resistance, you cannot but admit a world-wide distinction between the man who commits a mad assault and one who merely resists it. It is because we believe that Germany, since July, 1914 (and indeed long before) has been actuated by criminal lunacy, that we hold it our duty to prove it to her by the only method of proof she will admit or understand.

THE CRUCIAL QUESTION : WHO WILLED THE WAR ?

You will tell me, perhaps, that you have not neglected to look into the evidence of responsibility, but, having seriously studied it, have

arrived at the conclusion that all parties are equally to blame. I read this view in your whole "Appeal," and especially in the following passage :

What will be the judgment of the future ? That in our days, in all Europe, there was not a single statesman. Had there been one great statesman on each side, the world-war would never have broken out. Had there been one great statesman on either side, it would not have lasted a year.

Let us, if you please, discuss this theory of evenly-diffused international stupidity—for that is what it comes to.

In saying that if there had been one great statesman on each side there would have been no war, you come—forgive me—perilously near to truism. For a great Prussian statesman would not have suffered the pride of power and the lust of victory to become an obsession, either to his own soul, or to that of his country. A great Prussian statesman would have rated at its true worth the philosophy which declared war—as made in Germany—to be the noblest and most beneficent of human activities. A great Prussian statesman would not have gone out of his way to make enemies on every hand,

and then complained that they encircled him. A great Prussian statesman would have accepted the friendship which Britain over and over again offered to his country, and would have understood that neither Britain nor the world could look on unconcerned while the greatest military Power made itself the greatest naval Power as well. A great Prussian statesman, in short, would have known that the dilemma : "Weltmacht oder Niedergang," was a delusion of the devil, and would have kept Germany great, prosperous, contented and sane. But instead of a great statesman, there was in Prussia—well, you know, and all the world knows, what there was instead. I am sure we do not differ on that point, so I need not enlarge on it.

But, seeing that the destinies of Germany were given over, by the malice of Fate, to a War-Lord and a succession of obsequious bureaucrats, do you really think that a great statesman on the other side could have done anything to avert the catastrophe? "Mit der Dummheit kämpfen Götter selbst vergebens." It is probably true—though we stand too near them to judge with perfect confidence—that there is no statesman of the highest genius on



the side of the Entente. We possess many excellent and very able men, but not, I think, a Cavour, a Bismarck, or a Lincoln. But what could the greatest genius have done? We read in Indian legend of a Buddhist saint who could "expostulate convincingly with tigers;" but could the Buddha himself have expostulated convincingly with the German war-machine, screwed up to a terrific pitch of efficiency and panting to get to work? The German spirit, wielding the German weapons, and controlled only by a couple of gasconading Hohenzollerns, with their family tradition ever beckoning them to bloodshed, was a menace to civilisation that only a miracle could have averted. Are our statesmen to be despised, and even to be reckoned part-authors of the war, because they could not work miracles?

I know that, by going back through history for fifty or a hundred years, one can show that all nations have been wanting in wisdom here, in magnanimity there, and have thus contributed to the present disaster. But I am sure you will agree with me that such argument is very idle. It merely proves, what needs no proof, that Europe as a whole has not had sense enough to divest itself of the passions, cupidities

and superstitions which are the chief ingredients in the hell-brew of war. The whole historic responsibility for the disaster may be unravelled at the Day of Judgment—not before. The responsibility which we can reasonably discuss—the responsibility which matters—must rest upon men of this generation. To go back even to 1864 or to 1870 is to go too far back. What we have to determine is not the share which Napoleon III., Palmerston, Bismarck, Disraeli, Beust and Gortschakoff may have had in bringing about the conditions that led to the war. We have to decide what men of our own day—men, for the most part, now alive—committed the acts and adopted the policies which first led Europe to the brink of war, and then hurled her over.

I assert that the whole of this responsibility rests with the Central Empires, and that it is not neutral impartiality which would deny it, but blindness to a long series of incontrovertible facts.

#### THE FACTS OF THE FOURTEEN YEARS.

If, in what follows, I concentrate attention upon the case of Britain against Germany, it is only for the sake of brevity. Besides, the

German rage against Britain, the "Gott strafe England" frenzy, seems to proclaim that this may be regarded as the test case.

Can you deny, in the first place, that Germany was the one country in the world which made a deliberate cult of war? The brilliant and, as it seemed, highly profitable success of her arms between 1864 and 1871 was the joy and pride of her heart. Her public places were crowded with statues of swaggering soldiers, and their counterparts in flesh and blood swaggered through every department of her daily life. She spent vast sums in organisation and preparation for war, and devoted a great part of her technical talent and industry to perfecting the mechanism of destruction. The generation of 1870 felt, and transmitted to their children the feeling, that life held no experience so splendid as that of a series of swift, smashing victories. Her philosophers philosophised in the interests of the military State, her historians wrote their histories to bring peace and the love of peace into contempt. She was under the practically autocratic rule of a monarch who was no mere official head of the military establishment, but who loved to fancy himself as an actual warrior, and to rattle his sabre, both literally and

metaphorically, on every possible occasion. Can you doubt—you, an expert psychologist—that the theatrical imagination of the War-Lord was constantly dallying with the lure of what his hopeful heir-apparent gloatingly described as “the real thing”?

So much by way of reminding you what nation was antecedently likely, when peace and war were in the balance, to throw her sword into the scale. Perhaps you will tell me that there were war-maniacs in other nations as well. Yes; but they were few and almost unnoticed. Russia and France were characteristically the countries, not of war-maniacs, but of peace-maniacs. There were jingoes, no doubt, in England, but their jingoism would have been absolutely impotent but for the German menace, from which it derived its whole strength. Those of us who least sympathised with them are now forced to admit that they saw clearly. It is mere special-pleading, which I am sure you would despise, to pretend that any other country was constitutionally predisposed to war in anything like the degree that Germany was. No doubt there were large classes of Germans—perhaps the great majority—who would have preferred peace. But they had no

control over the class whose hands were on the levers of the machine.

Let us now glance at Anglo-German relations from the turn of the century onwards. And here let me refer you to the source from which I take my facts. It is not an English or a pro-Ally authority : it is Count Ernst zu Reventlow's book, "*Deutschlands auswärtige Politik.*"

Down to the end of last century, the relations between the two countries had been, in the main, excellent. So little had we been inclined to see in Germany a probable enemy, that we had bartered away Heligoland for a very trifling equivalent. About the middle of the 'nineties, indeed, a good deal of ill-feeling towards England began to grow up in Germany, nobody can quite tell why. Presumably it was due to the fact that the spread of German commerce led to the realisation that English-speaking peoples were established at many points of vantage throughout the world, which Germany, in her new fever of expansion, would have found it very convenient to occupy. No doubt this was annoying; but I am sure you cannot share the illusion that England had it in her power to remedy the annoyance. England could no more give away her self-governing Dominions than

she could give away Brazil, or Chile, or anything else that did not belong to her. She possessed nothing of any considerable value that it was in her power to hand over to Germany; but she raised no finger to hinder Germany from acquiring a vast and valuable colonial empire. Nor is it alleged that she made any hostile discrimination against Germany, either at home or abroad. In her home ports, the door was open to German commerce. Nowhere did she place any obstacle to that "peaceful penetration" which Germany so justly valued and so assiduously pursued. It is true she made a law to prevent German goods from being sold as English goods; but German writers boast that it operated in favour of Germany instead of against her. At no point is there so much as a suggestion that England did any substantial, and much less any wilful, wrong to Germany. Yet, as I have said, a marked anti-English feeling gradually grew up among the German people.

Then came the Boer War, and with it an outburst of frantic Anglophobia, not far short of that which now prevails. Perhaps you may think it a just, and even a generous emotion; if so, I shall not dispute the point. But at any

rate you will not maintain that England's action in South Africa did Germany any positive harm, or interfered with any avowable German ambition. The Kaiser afterwards declared that he drew up the strategic scheme which led to the ultimate British victory; and, whatever the value of the scheme or the use made of it, we must at all events credit him with an intention which he could scarcely have cherished had he felt that his country had any just ground of complaint against Britain. Nevertheless, hatred of England certainly rose to an unexampled pitch in Germany—and this was precisely the time chosen for announcing and pushing forward a plan of naval construction quite openly directed to challenging that command of the sea on which the very existence of an island people depends. The whole German nation took up the scheme with enthusiasm, and the private, or semi-private, "Flottenverein" became a most powerful auxiliary of the Government.

Now, my dear Master, what would you have had England do? If you are a Tolstoyan, you will say, "She ought to have destroyed her Fleet, and said to Germany, 'I dare you to injure a neighbour who is powerless to resist you!'" But I take it you are not a Tolstoyan. You



admit that Britain had the right, and even the duty, to take measures for the security of her shores, to say nothing of the protection of the smaller nations depending on her. Perhaps you will say, "She might simply have met Germany's menace by maintaining the advantage she already possessed in naval construction." But this cut-throat competition was a ruinous game, which obviously could not be carried to infinity. Besides, other nations were building navies, and Germany might at any time have engineered a coalition against us, which might, in a great naval battle, have written *Finis Britannia* across the page of history. Is England to be blamed for having sought in the friendship of France a counterpoise to the undisguised enmity of Germany? A very few years before, England and France had been on the verge of war over the Fashoda incident; but they now removed without difficulty all their little points of friction in various parts of the world, and arrived at a "cordial understanding." An understanding with France almost inevitably involved a settlement of differences with her ally, Russia; and this simple substitution of rational friendship for irrational suspicion and ill-will is what Germany complains of as "Einkreisungs-

politik"! What could be more legitimate? England had no motive for aggression against Germany; but she was not bound to remain at loggerheads with her neighbours in the West and in the East, in order to suit Germany's convenience. If Bismarck had been alive, indeed, he would never have committed the error, from the German point of view, of driving England into the arms of France and Russia. But was it England's fault that, as you justly remark, there was no great statesman in Germany?

Far be it from me to deny that, quite apart from any consideration of its political value, the new friendship with France was a source of profound gratification to every thoughtful Englishman. You, sir, a lover of that noble nation, would have been the first to despise us had this not been so. But we in no way relaxed our efforts to conciliate Germany, and to arrive at an understanding with her that should put at end to the suicidal competition in naval armaments. To all suggestions Germany turned a deaf ear. Far from slackening, she speeded up her naval construction. She gave it clearly to be understood that nothing would satisfy her but the power to defy Britain at sea, which meant, of course, the power, if she won a naval

battle, to starve us out in three or four months, without even the trouble of an invasion. Read Count Reventlow, and you will find set forth in full, both Britain's attempts at approximation, and Germany's reasons for rejecting them. You will read, too, of mischief wrought by the British jingo Press; but you will not read of the at least equally noxious outpourings of German Anglophobe organs. And on one point, let me say, the Count conveys a very false impression. He speaks of the insulting and contemptuous tone adopted towards Germany by the British Press; and he doubtless has some particular articles in view. But the common tone of the British Press was anything but contemptuous. Germany was constantly held up to our admiration, and we were constantly being urged to imitate her thoroughness and the energy and adaptability of her business methods.

In Reventlow, too, you will find related with pride how Germany baffled and stultified the Hague Conferences, into which she entered with cynical and scarcely dissembled ill-will. To invite her to such discussions was, indeed, like inviting a butcher to a vegetarian congress. Was not war at once Germany's great industry and the art in which she had attained an unapproachable perfection? Why expect her to

join sincerely in a movement which, if successful, would bring down Krupp's shares with a run, and leave the Crown Prince sighing in vain for "the real thing"?

You will read, moreover, how Germany, "in shining armour," stood by Austria in her gallant exploit of annexing Bosnia the moment she saw that Russia was in no condition to resist. And you will read of the squabbles over Morocco, in which England infuriated Germany by taking her stand at the side of France, but in which, assuredly, no substantial injury was done to Germany, who obtained the "compensation" she demanded. You will not, I think, find in Reventlow, but you may read in Rohrbach's "Der Krieg und die deutsche Politik" how, a very short time before the war, England, ever conciliatory where it was by any means possible, was making important concessions to Germany in the Tigris valley and in Africa.

The history, in short, of the first fourteen years of the century is one long record of German menace and aggression. She ostentatiously threatens England, she truculently abets Austria in breaking a treaty and humiliating Russia, she contemptuously thwarts the efforts made at The Hague to secure a co-operative movement towards permanent peace. The

Balkan War, indeed, is localised—not through the efforts of Germany, but mainly, as all parties admit, by the devoted labours, the tact, and the transparent disinterestedness of Sir Edward Grey. We may have no great statesmen in England, but we have at any rate the man who, in one acute and most difficult crisis, succeeded in staving off the catastrophe. The defeat of her dear friend Turkey, however, weakened Germany's position in the Near East; and she proceeded to restore the balance by making great additions to her already overwhelming military forces. Does this record of fourteen years appeal to your sympathies as a lover of peace? Or can you conscientiously say, as you look back upon it, that all parties were equally guilty of creating the conditions which led to the war? I am sure you cannot. I am sure you must own that from Germany and her accomplice, Austria, came the movements that threatened war, while the movements for the promotion of peace were strangled by Germany's obstructive cynicism.

#### THE FACTS OF THE THIRTEEN DAYS.

We come now to the narrower and still clearer question of the immediate responsibility for the rush over the precipice during the fatal days

between July 23 and August 4, 1914. Is it possible that you can have read, even cursorily, the diplomatic documents, and can still believe that there is the smallest tittle of truth in the German assertion that two innocent and peace-loving Empires were wantonly attacked by a gang of malicious enemies? If so, I can only marvel at your credulity.

Let me very rapidly run over the main heads of the case. I will begin by assuming, though it has never been proved, that Austria's grounds of complaint against Serbia were in the main justified. What, then, does she do? She hurls at the head of her inconvenient neighbour an ultimatum admitted on all hands to be unexampled in the history of diplomacy, demanding abject submission within forty-eight hours. England and Russia plead for an extension of the ridiculous time-limit. Germany declines to endorse the plea, and Austria meets it with a "categorical refusal." Then, to the amazement of everyone—and not the least, we may be sure, of Austria herself—Serbia, to all intents and purposes, submits. It is of no avail. Austria seizes on the two or three trifling reservations in Serbia's answer, declares war by telegraph, and proceeds with feverish haste to bombard

Belgrade. She knows, and everybody knows, that every bomb that bursts in Belgrade impairs the prestige of Russia and lowers her self-respect. But that does not deter her—far from it! Meanwhile Russia shows no disposition to shield Serbia from reasonable penance for anything she may have done amiss—such penance to include the giving of guarantees for future good behaviour. All she says is that she cannot stand by and see a small State of her own race and religion ruthlessly overwhelmed by a great Empire. In concert with England and France, she is even willing that Austria shall occupy Belgrade and the surrounding territory “until she has obtained complete satisfaction from Serbia” through the mediation of the Powers. Is it possible for the spirit of conciliation to go further? Other suggestions for smoothing out the tangle proceed from St. Petersburg and from London. They are all baffled in Berlin, which, though entreated to do so, offers not a single suggestion of its own. The case has been statistically summed up as follows :

We have fourteen definite and clearly-distinguishable proposals. Of these not one emanates in the first instance from Berlin. One may have been strongly supported by



Bethmann-Hollweg, but the evidence is doubtful. Five are passed on by Berlin to Vienna, as a postman passes on a letter, with complete indifference as to its contents. Three are definitely rejected without consultation with Vienna. Two are evaded and lead to nothing. Of three no notice is taken.

Sir Edward Grey's proposal for a conference of ambassadors is rejected in Berlin because "it would amount to a court of arbitration"—dreadful thought! One hopeful suggestion after another is wrecked on the rocks of the Wilhelmstrasse. The Tsar proposes to the Kaiser that the dispute should be referred to the Hague Conference—no notice is taken. At last, determined that Britain at any rate shall not have blood-guiltiness upon her soul, Sir Edward Grey tells the German Ambassador that if Germany will put forward "any reasonable proposal" which Russia and France shall unreasonably reject, Britain will withdraw from them her support—and again no notice is taken. You say the Allies have no great statesmen, my dear Master, and I have not disputed your assertion. But I should have much more confidence in it if you would be good enough to

point out what Sir Edward Grey, or M. Sazonof, or M. Viviani could have done for peace, in those fateful days, and did not do? Yes, there is one thing they could have done: they could have abdicated for ever, on behalf of their respective countries, all right to raise a voice in international affairs, and could have left Europe prostrate under the heel of Germany. Is it their crime, in your eyes, that they failed to do so?

#### THE MOBILISATION SWINDLE.

Perhaps you will tell me—though I scarcely think that your neutrality will carry you so far—that Russia precipitated the war by her premature mobilisation. Germany has, indeed, worked the mobilisation swindle for all it is worth; but I cannot believe that it has imposed on you. Every intelligent man must know that the line which separates mobilisation from mere “military precautions” is such a delicate one that a General Staff itself may not be quite clear as to the precise moment at which it is crossed, and may, in comparative good faith, declare that mobilisation has not begun, when, to all intents and purposes, it has. The evidence as to the precise extent and sequence of the various mobilisations of the crowded and crucial days

is inextricably conflicting. Probably there was some equivocation on all sides. But the cardinal facts stand out clear and incontrovertible, and they are these: (1) It was Austria that first mobilised; (2) It was Austria that forced the pace by the furious haste of her onslaught on Serbia; (3) Both Austria and Germany, but especially Germany, could mobilise incomparably quicker than Russia, and Germany, therefore, had no reasonable excuse for seizing upon the first moves of Russia's mobilisation in the north as a pretext for instant war. That she should herself mobilise was natural enough; but, had she had any genuine will to peace, she would not have made that a reason for breaking off negotiations which she herself declares (though I think the assertion is insincere) to have been on the verge of bearing fruit.

May I explain to you why I use such an outspoken term as "mobilisation swindle"?—why I reject the more charitable hypothesis that German statesmen were really swept away by uncontrollable panic at the thought that Russia's millions were beginning to move? It is because we have clear evidence that the whole policy of making the enemy appear the aggressor was deliberately thought out in advance and carried

through according to schedule. Bismarck, as we know, had laid it down that "success depends essentially upon the impressions that are produced in our own and other countries by the origin of the war; it is important that we be the ones attacked." Again: "If we attack, the whole weight of the imponderables will be on the side of the adversary." And yet again he declared that the German people, in a war of aggression, "would not show the same spirit and fire as in a war in which we were attacked." It had thus become a fixed principle of German statecraft that the enemy must be made to appear the aggressor; but unfortunately there was no Bismarck at hand to manipulate an Ems telegram. Therefore the pretext of mobilisation was seized upon for want of a better; and at the same time it was helped out by another device which throws a flood of light upon the Austro-German habit of mind. Let me call your attention to three small but very significant circumstances. The Austrian declaration of war on Serbia, the German declaration of war on Russia, and the German declaration of war on France, *were each accompanied by an assertion that Serbia, Russia and France respectively had actually begun the war by armed attacks.* Can

there be any doubt that this was part of a well-understood system of throwing dust in the eyes of the Austrian and German people, and, if possible, of the neutral world? In the case of France it has been proved that the assertion was a quite fantastic falsehood. So determined were the French Government to avoid anything in the shape of a "frontier incident," that they actually kept their troops ten kilometres away from the frontier. It is certain, on the other hand, that German cavalry patrols had at two points penetrated into French territory before war was declared. As to Serbia and Russia, it is impossible to say that some trifling frontier incident may not have occurred, in one case or in both, though there is no evidence on the point. But if it were proved up to the hilt, what would it matter? It is perfectly clear that, to Serbia, Russia and France alike, every moment of delay was priceless. Serbia knew that her one chance lay in securing a respite that should give Russia time to create a diversion in her favour. Russia knew that Germany was ready to the last buckle, while she herself was utterly unready. France, if not quite so unprepared, had everything to gain by delay, and had not the smallest temptation to force hostilities. Can any sane man

believe that all three enemies of the Central Powers, moved by one common madness, rushed headlong into action which it was to their vital interest to postpone as long as possible? It is flatly incredible. If there was any basis whatever for the Teutonic allegations in the case of Serbia or Russia, it can only have been the irresponsible action of individuals, which the Governments would have disavowed and punished had their attention been called to it. I suggest that the triple recurrence of these childishly incredible assertions proves them to have been made, with deliberate insincerity, for the express purpose of stirring up popular feeling, and reinforcing the myth of an unprovoked attack upon two peaceable and innocuous Empires. They are subsidiary devices to the mobilisation swindle, and go a long way to prove the fraudulent nature of that manœuvre. I agree with you in thinking that Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg is not a very clever man, but he is not such a fool as to believe that either Russia or France would intentionally fire a single shot a moment earlier than was absolutely necessary. Did he not say himself, "La France peut attendre, mais nous, non"?

The precise point at which Germany finally

determined on war is not known and may perhaps never be known. It may have been before the despatch of the ultimatum to Serbia, or it may not have been until the War Council met at Potsdam on Wednesday, July 29th. After a close study of the documents, I incline to the latter opinion. But that her determination was fixed and irrevocable at least twenty-four hours before Russia began to mobilise in the north is as plain as anything can be. Not even the warning that Britain reserved to herself complete freedom of action could alter it.

#### RESPONSIBILITY SUMMARISED.

In the face of all these facts—the facts of the fourteen years and the facts of the thirteen days—it is, I confess, a marvel to me that you can write as though all parties were equally to blame for the world-catastrophe. This is not neutrality: this is blindness to the most abundant, conclusive, overwhelming evidence. Let me briefly recapitulate it:

##### GERMANY.

(1) Believes ardently in war as the noblest and most beneficent of human activities: a doctrine preached by her most popular his-

##### THE ALLIES.

(1) In every country there is a strong pacifist party, including men of great influence. In every country, whatever war-party



## GERMANY.

torians and philosophers, and everywhere re-echoed in literature, journalism and education.

(2) Contains at any rate a considerable party which openly agitates for large territorial expansion, whether in or out of Europe.

(3) Possesses a gigantic military machine, complete in every detail, and controlled by a powerful caste whose whole interest and ambition lie in the direction of war.

(4.) Avowedly aims at adding to its overwhelming military power an equally overwhelming naval power.

(5) Rejects all proposals tending in the direction of arbitration or restriction of armaments.

(6) Repeatedly uses the threat of war—the “shining armor” menace—in diplomatic conjunctures.

## THE ALLIES.

may exist, derives its whole strength from the constant menace of Germany's military preparations and aggressive temper.

(2) Have no desire for territorial expansion, least of all at Germany's expense. Even the French feeling as to Alsace-Lorraine is admittedly quiescent.\*

(3) Are forced by the German menace to make costly military preparations, but neither are no imagine themselves to be in a comparable state of preparation.

(4) Stand purely on the defensive, merely taking such steps as shall not leave them entirely at Germany's mercy.

(5) Are earnestly in favor of all such proposals.

(6) Only once—in the Agadir incident—resort to any kind of threat.

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\* It may be said that Russia hankered after Constantinople. Had the year been 1920 instead of 1914, there would have been some plausibility in suspecting Russia of making war for this ambition, for by that time she would have been more or less prepared. But no sane Government rushes, except on compulsion, into a war for which it knows itself to be unprepared.

## GERMANY.

(7) Thinks that she has everything to gain by war.

(8) Does nothing to restrain her ally from an action of unprecedented insolence, manifestly endangering the peace of Europe.

(9) In the negotiations that ensue, makes no single proposal tending towards the maintenance of peace, and obstinately blocks all the proposals emanating from other Powers.

(10) Seizes the first excuse which can be made to look plausible in the eyes of her own people for dragging all Europe into war.

## THE ALLIES.

(7) Know that they have nothing to gain in any way commensurate with the enormous risk.

(8) Go all lengths in concessions to Austrian insolence, short of handing over Serbia unconditionally to Austria's tender mercies.

(9) Use every conceivable effort for the maintenance of peace, and implore Germany, without avail, to name her own terms of settlement.

(10) Go into the war reluctant and heavy-hearted, because there is no alternative save that of leaving Germany with her heel upon the neck of Europe.

I beg you to examine this parallel carefully. Here and there you may be able to pick holes and suggest qualifications; but I cannot conceive it possible for you to deny that the balance is overwhelmingly on our side. We come to the bar of history with clean hands, and we say that it is not neutrality but disloyalty to truth to talk as though they were as black—or as red—as Germany's.

## RUTHLESSNESS IN THEORY AND IN PRACTICE.

I observe with no less concern that you are as neutral on the question of atrocities as on that of responsibility for the war. Here again you seem to proceed on the extraordinary assumption that, because there is a conflict of evidence, it is idle to enquire on which side the weight of the evidence lies. You say :

Both parties declare that, among their opponents, the basest passions have broken loose, and both are unfortunately right.

Here you have—I am sure inadvertently—slipped into one of those statements which, under a surface of truism, conceal the gravest perversion of the truth. It would, of course, be foolish to deny that war is a school of evil passions, and that most men, in the heat of battle, will do things of which, in calmer moments, they would not dream. Let the men who made the war bear the responsibility for the “breaking loose” of the wild beast in human nature. Sven Hedin—another eminent neutral—would have us think that all German soldiers are saints and angels. For the Allies I make no such ridiculous pretension. But it must surely have been in your haste that you, my dear Master, wrote as though,

in the matter of sins against humanity, all distinctions of degree were negligible.

In the first place, you overlook one very significant fact: namely, that the German official text-books of war openly inculcate "ruthlessness." Sometimes the ground alleged is simply that in war no consideration must be allowed to imperil the one thing needful, namely, victory. Sometimes the theorists have recourse to the more dangerous and devilish sophism that ruthlessness is the highest form of humanity. Be this as it may, the fact is undisputed that the military ethics of Germany, as developed since 1870, not only palliate but prescribe a pitiless use of the power of the sword for the terrorising and paralysing of civil populations. This being so, why should you doubt or seek to discount the piles of evidence, sifted and attested to the last iota, and scarcely denied by the Germans themselves, of ruthless massacres, and other hideous atrocities, in Belgium and Northern France? Nothing at all approaching to this is even alleged against the Allied troops. If they have been guilty of inhuman actions, it has been sporadically, in the heat of battle, against the orders of their officers, against the principles laid down for them by their High Command.

They are not, and cannot possibly be, accused of anything like the cold-blooded, systematic, official cruelty and bestiality laid to the charge of the German army, and unfortunately proved as completely as human testimony can prove anything. Let me draw your attention to a point that may not have occurred to you : in the war of 1870, there were, no doubt, the mutual recriminations between the two armies which we hear of in every war; but there were no allegations of atrocities one-tenth part so extensive or so horrible as those laid to the charge of the German armies in Belgium. How are we to account for the difference? Are the civil population of Belgium and Northern France ten times greater liars than the Frenchmen of 1870? Must we not rather look to the fact that, in the meantime, the German theory of war, and of the rights of the German in war, have undergone marked developments in a very deplorable direction? May we not remember that in the meantime your friend Nietzsche (whose "Zarathustra" the cultured German soldier is said to carry in his knapsack) has glorified the ideal of the conquering "blond beast"? May we not see, in short, convincing evidence that, since 1870, and largely as a result of 1870, an evil spirit

has grown up in Central Europe which must be stamped out if humanity is to return, with any hopefulness, to the paths of peaceful development?

#### ATROCITY AT SEA.

So much for atrocity on land. As for atrocity at sea, you will scarcely pretend, I think, that anything alleged against the Allies can perceptibly diminish the mountainous pre-eminence of the Central Powers in that respect. No doubt you are sufficiently neutral to hold that, as submarine warfare was not clearly foreseen in international law, Germany was justified in acting as if there were no law, and allowing no consideration of humanity to interfere with her convenience. But I think you will admit that the sinking of the *Lusitania*—to say nothing of other exploits—was not a pretty incident, not one which any humane nation would rejoice to inscribe in its annals. Even if it can be formally justified on the assumption of a state of utter anarchy at sea, it was at best a terrible, a heart-rending catastrophe. When the *Titanic* went to the bottom, the world shuddered at the callousness of Fate. How little did anyone imagine that, only three years later, the callousness of

civilised—nay, cultured—man would bring about a similar, but much more horrible, massacre of the innocents! And how was it received in Germany? It is said to be untrue that school-children were given a holiday to celebrate the event; but there is not the least doubt that a yell of triumph and exultation went up from the Press and the nation at large. I held in my hand, only the other day, a medal struck to commemorate the glorious naval victory. Shall I send it you, as a suitable recognition of your inflexible neutrality?

Do you think, my dear Dr. Brandes, that it gives me any pleasure to rehearse the long roll of German crimes? On the contrary, I should feel my heart greatly lightened, and the future very sensibly brightened, if I could return a verdict of "Not guilty" or "Guilty only in the degree inevitable in war." But my mind—unlike yours, it would seem—has an obstinate habit of weighing evidence, and registering the deflection of the balance. I find it impossible to reconcile the German spirit of to-day with my memories of Germany and of many German friends. But—again yielding to evidence—I cannot doubt that the spirit of callous brutality is not peculiar to the military forces, but has in



some degree permeated the civil population. There seems to be no question, for example, that the people of Cologne behaved abominably to the miserable inhabitants of Liège who, by some strange freak of the military authorities, were transported to that city, under conditions reminiscent of the Black Hole of Calcutta. There is no doubt whatever that the people of Wittenberg jeered at the wretched prisoners of war as they buried the victims of the easily-preventible typhus epidemic. It is things like these that will make it hard—terribly hard—to resume human relations with the German people. One must not, however, be misled by the fallacy that lurks in such phrases as “the people of Cologne,” “the people of Wittenberg.” It was only some of the people of these places—doubtless a small minority—that made brutes of themselves. One must cling to the certainty that there must still be many reasonable, humane and kindly people in Germany, who will one day shake off the influence of the great Lie, and see into what moral morasses the militarist will-o’-the-wisp has led their Fatherland. As for the sediment who are capable of jeering at miserable and helpless enemies—well, we must e’en pray for the power to regard them with some of your neutrality of spirit.

## THE CAMPAIGN OF MENDACITY.

Another characteristic in which you see no distinction between the belligerent nations is that of mendacity. They all, you say, declare that lies are necessary means of defence. Let us look into this a little.

I have already tried to show—and I cannot see how you can resist the demonstration—that on the great fundamental question as to who willed the war, the German Government, with the deliberate intention of deceiving the German people, has lied itself black in the face. Upon that great fundamental Lie we need not return. But the question of minor mendacity is also not without its interest.

As soon as war breaks out, the whole world becomes one vast lie-factory—of that there is no doubt. The air is alive with lies, quivering like motes in a sunbeam. Many, we must conclude, are deliberate fictions; some seem to come into existence by spontaneous generation, without any assignable parentage. A case in point was that amazing myth of the Russian army passing through England which took possession of the English mind in the autumn of 1914. All the neutral capitals are teeming hot-beds of lies. The public of all countries is insatiably

hungry for news; the Governments of all countries dole out news very sparingly; and when true news runs short, the ingenious journalist supplies its place with false news. He may not always consciously invent, but he seizes on and magnifies every vague, irresponsible rumour, though he may know very well that the chances are 100 to 1 against its being true. If you tell me, then, that war is a terrible breeder both of mendacity and of credulity, I cordially agree with you.

But when we come to the question which side has systematically, and as a matter of deliberate policy, manufactured and circulated lies, I say that Germany holds an unapproachable pre-eminence. Here, if anywhere, her genius for organisation is beyond praise. Through her official and her underground news-agencies, she has fed the neutral world with lies to a point unprecedented in history, from the moment when, at the beginning of the war, she circulated a full report of a speech which Mr. John Burns did not deliver, at a meeting which never took place. That her policy has been in some measure effective, is proved, my dear Master, by your present attitude. In spite of your keenly critical habit of thought, a good many German lies have

apparently crept past your defences and entrenched themselves in your mind. Let me cite one instance of the class of lie which does not arise by spontaneous generation, but is manufactured and aimed as purposefully as a poison shell. Here it is :

Berlin, 12 September [1914]. The Japanese Government has officially notified the Chinese Government of the outbreak of a revolution in India, and has added the information that the British Government has applied to Japan for assistance against India. This Japan has promised to give, under the following conditions : free immigration for the Japanese into British possessions in the Pacific, a free hand for Japan in China, and a loan of 200 million dollars to Japan. England has accepted these conditions.

This is not the fantasy of an irresponsible journalist. This is a deliberate fabrication circulated with a clear political purpose; and, though its falsity must have been manifest a few days after its appearance, some neutral minds have a curious faculty for remembering the lie and forgetting the contradiction.

Here against I must ask why you decline to

see any distinction between Germany, which is merely acting up to the principles she openly professes, and England, which neither professes nor believes in such principles. Has not Nietzsche, in preaching the Will to Power, laid it down that "everything evil, terrible, tyrannical, wild-beast-like *and serpent-like* in man contributes to the elevation of the species, just as much as its opposite"? Has not Bernhardt declared that even in peace "the relations between two States must often be termed a latent war. . . .Such a position justifies the employment of hostile methods, cunning and deception, just as war itself does." You are right, then, in saying that Germany maintains her lies to be necessary lies; but when has England made any such confession or boast, whichever you like to call it? Believe me, I am not taking up either an idealistic or a pharisaic attitude. It is quite possible that if England were convinced that systematic mendacity was an effective weapon, she would adopt it, just as, in the trenches, she has replied to poison gas with poison gas. I am merely stating the plain fact that the men who control England's action still believe honesty to be the best policy, and act on that belief. Even if we came to the opposite conclusion, I cannot

imagine that our lie campaign would ever rival that of Germany in vigor and efficiency. Here, I admit, Germany may justly claim your homage; but we may as justly disclaim it.

#### GREECE AND THE CENSORSHIP.

I find throughout your "Appeal" the most curious illustrations of a homely English proverb of which you may have heard: "One man may steal the horse, while another must not look over the hedge." You are indignant when the Allies look over the hedge, while you barely mention, or not at all, that Germany has stolen the horse.

You remark, for instance, "Germany has trodden Belgium under foot, Austria Serbia, and *England Greece.*" Was there ever such an equation of inequalities! Germany, in defiance of her own plighted word, overwhelmed, crushed, ruined, almost obliterated Belgium, and ruthlessly maltreated and murdered the civil population. England, relying upon a treaty of mutual aid between Greece and one of the Allies, and acting upon the invitation of the leading statesman of Greece, took certain steps in that country, and laid certain plans in connection with them. Suddenly the King, in defiance of the constitution which the Allied Powers had

guaranteed in 1863, reversed the national policy, interpreting his treaty obligations in a way which may, at a pinch, be defensible, but was certainly belated. England and France, thus placed at a sudden disadvantage, could scarcely be expected to withdraw altogether. They have pursued a policy which has caused some natural irritation in Greece, though they are still far from being unpopular with the whole people. At all events they have laid waste no towns and massacred no "hostages." They have not, so far as I know, directly caused the death of a single man, woman or child, though Greeks have been killed by the aircraft bombs of the Central Powers. To talk in the same breath of Germany's action in Belgium and the Allies' action in Greece is indeed a triumph of neutrality. May I add to your catalogue of the evils wrought by the war, the deadening of moral sensibility, the paralysis of all sense of proportion, displayed in this juxtaposition?

Still more amazing is it to find a Dane, or any Scandinavian, talk bitterly of England's opening of letters, and breathe no word of Germany's sinking of ships and slaughter of sailors. You are outraged because private letters, "even between two neutrals," are opened. May I

remind you of two facts : first, that every neutral country swarms with “ neutrals ” who are active German agents ; second, that it is impossible to know, until a letter is opened, that it is from a neutral to a neutral. If there were any means of distinguishing harmless letters by looking at the envelopes, I assure you we would adopt it ; for it would save an enormous amount of time and tedium. I will even confess that, in my own opinion, there *are* many letters in regard to which the chance of their containing anything harmful is so small that they might safely be allowed to pass unopened. But there is something to be said on the other side. If it were known that certain classes of letters got through unexamined, German agents and spies would quickly learn to imitate their appearance. As for the parcel post, the necessity for examining it if any effective blockade is to be maintained must surely be apparent to you. But all this is really beside the purpose. I fully admit that the exercise of any censorship is an unpleasant and degrading necessity, and quite naturally annoying to neutrals. Let them blame the people who made the war ! What astounds and bewilders us in England is not that you neutrals should be concerned about your letters, but that



you should be (to all appearance) so unconcerned about your ships and your lives. I read in a neutral (American) state-paper that between August, 1914, and March, 1916, 136 Scandinavian and Dutch ships have been sunk by German U boats, to say nothing of 66 wrecked by mines, most of them certainly German. Of the total number of ships destroyed, 97 were Norwegian, 50 Swedish, and 28 Danish. It is true that no Danish lives are stated to have been lost; but 77 Norwegians and 128 Swedes have gone to the bottom. What protest do I find in your "Appeal" against this wanton slaughter, as repugnant to the laws of war as to the laws of humanity? I find not a single syllable. You are bitter as to letters, you are silent as to lives. Yet the letters, with a little delay, ultimately arrive. Have you no thought for all the Scandinavian homes where the husband, the father, the son arrives nevermore? "Censorship" is indeed an ugly word, and no beautiful thing; but how strange is the neutrality which denounces it while it condones in silence the most abominable form of assassination! You have in Danish an excellent word for this crime: you call it "snigmord"—"sneak-murder"—but I find no such word in your "Appeal."

But even if there were no tragic contrast between the action of British and of German sea-power, your outcry against the Censorship would be typical of what I cannot but regard as an inconsequence of thought running through a great part of your pronouncement. You say :

We follow this war against militarism which has extended military compulsion to the one nation which had hitherto remained free from it. . . . We follow this fight for freedom, in which the spokesmen of freedom, like the worshippers of might, hold up every ship and open every letter. . . . We follow this fight for right, in which right is everywhere flouted . . . this war for the independence of small States, in which that independence is on both sides infringed, disregarded, abolished.

You urge, in short, that the Allies are outraging their own ideals, and imply that they are grossly inconsistent, if not hypocritical. But can you really maintain that this is a just reproach? How is militarism to be met but by militarism? Heaven knows we have tried to reason with it, but it will hear no reason. It is precisely the worst evil of militarism that it puts its pistol to the head of civilisation, and

says, "Be militarist, or die!" The difference between us and Germany—a difference which ought to command your sympathy rather than your sarcasm—is that we know the method which Germany forces upon us to be evil, while she exults in it and worships it. And so with the other reproaches above cited: we are forced to do in war things which we intensely dislike, because, if we omit them, victory may remain with the Power which does not dislike them at all, but revels in them, and would perpetuate the conditions which render them necessary. You complain that we act inconsistently with principles which, by your very complaint, you admit to be good; but you do not seem to notice that Germany escapes your sarcasm by contemning these principles—by asserting that militarism is the noblest instrument of culture, that freedom is a delusion, that might is right, and that small nations are not entitled to call their souls their own. We are compelled by Germany to depart, in a certain measure, from good principles; Germany has the logical advantage (if you call it one) of being ruthlessly faithful to infamous principles.

Perhaps you will tell me that your argument is not intended as a reproach to the Allies, but

simply as a *reductio ad absurdum* of war. Very well; but the pity is that you seem to address your *reductio ad absurdum* to the Powers who admit it in advance—who are fighting against war—and not to the Power which glories in the “drastic remedy” of war, and is fighting lest a puling pacificism should corrupt the world.

#### THE PRUSSIAN PORCUPINE.

How strange that, while the brutal stupidity of war seems to be the idea uppermost in your mind, you should have no sympathy with the effort of the Allies to break the power of the war-makers of Europe! You write:

When people declare that they do not wish to crush Germany, but only its militarism, it is as though one were to say, “I don’t want to hurt the porcupine, but only to pull out its quills.”

Have you considered the implications of this fable? I do not know much about natural history, but I presume you mean to convey—what is doubtless the truth—that the porcupine could not live without its bristles. Are we, then, to conclude that Germany cannot live without militarism? To what a depth of pessimism must you

be reduced if you, a hater of war, are seriously convinced that the whole of Central Europe must either live by and for war or not live at all! But you do not seriously believe anything of the sort. You know the danger of arguing in metaphors, and I think you will admit that the image of the porcupine will not hold water. It is perfectly certain that Germany can, if she will, live without militarism—without that subordination of her whole social fabric to military aims, ambitions and ideals which has brought this calamity upon the world. What is militarism? May we not define it as *a morbid preponderance, in all a nation's thoughts and activities, of the idea of war and the preparation of war*. The only word that can possibly be disputed in this definition is "morbid." If you do not accept it, then your whole "Appeal" falls to the ground; for what is the use of denouncing war, if you maintain that Germany's intense predisposition to and pre-occupation with war was healthy and necessary? If, on the other hand, you do accept the word, then it follows that a nation may live a healthy, vigorous and prosperous life without this hypertrophe of its aggressive instincts. Either, then, your "Appeal" is from the outset condemned to futility, or you must own that the

attempt to make this particular porcupine a little less fretful and bristly than he has been in the past is not so absurd as your parable would imply.

A not ill-qualified German observer—Maximilian Harden—is far from thinking that the very life of the German hedgehog lies in its bristles. He starts, of course, from the assumption that the war will end in a German victory, or something, at any rate, that may be represented as such; yet he writes: “Is the uprooting of militarism possible? To my mind, yes; an inevitable certainty.” And he proceeds to lay down a program, including the extension of arbitration, the restriction of armaments, the nationalisation of munition-works—everything, in short, that Germany has hitherto fought against so obstinately. If such things can be achieved, assuredly the war will not have been fought in vain.

But I am sure you will not so far mistake the purport of this letter as to imagine that I am defending this war, or any war, against your denunciation. Nothing can exaggerate the horror with which all reasonable people regard it; and I imagine that even those Germans who rushed into it blithely, in the expectation of a

“frischer, fröhlicher Krieg” have now changed their tune, and may so far be classed among reasonable people. You rather understate the case when you say: “There may have been a Shakespeare or a Newton, a Kant or a Goethe, a Molière or a Pasteur, a Copernicus, a Rubens or a Tolstoy, among the hundreds of thousands of young Englishmen, Germans, Frenchmen, Poles, Belgians, Russians, who have fallen.” It is true we can only say that there *may* have been a supreme genius; but we can say with all certainty that there *must* have been many great, and fertile, and beneficent talents extinguished in the murderous cataclysm. In the narrow circle of my own acquaintance, I can think of three dead men from whom great things might confidently have been expected, and two or three others who live in daily danger. One of these, by the way, is a young American poet fighting in the ranks of France—a sad declension from the ideal of neutrality. But the more deeply we deplore the immensity of torture, ruin and waste involved in this struggle, the more is it incumbent on us to arrive at a sane and thoroughly informed judgment as to who is responsible for the gigantic crime. It will not do simply to say, “I am tired of this horror! Take it away! ‘A

plague on both your houses ! ' ' ' That is a shirking of a clear responsibility that rests upon every intelligent human being. The neutrality which declines to distinguish black from white is simply a disease of the moral vision.

To myself—if I may end upon an egotistic note—this war has been a pain unspeakable. Though I have hitherto had less of direct personal anxiety than hundreds of thousands of my countrymen and countrywomen, I seem to have been living for two years in a nightmare. Though I have never been absolutely a pessimist as to the result, my optimism has been of a valetudinarian order, terribly liable to shocks and chills. I often wonder whether there was ever a time when I could waken in the morning without a sense of black oppression, and open a newspaper without a tremor. But though war is thus as torturing to my temperament as it is abhorrent to my intellect, I have never for a moment dreamt of wishing that my country had made another choice than that which she made in August, 1914—if, indeed, she can be said to have had any choice after Germany had crossed the Belgian frontier. And to you, my dear Master, I may say in conclusion that, with all my profound esteem for you, with all my



admiration and envy for your talent, your achievements and your fame, there is one respect in which I would not for the world change places with you. Whatever sorrow the war has brought or may bring me, I would not for the world be a neutral.

Yours most sincerely,

WILLIAM ARCHER.

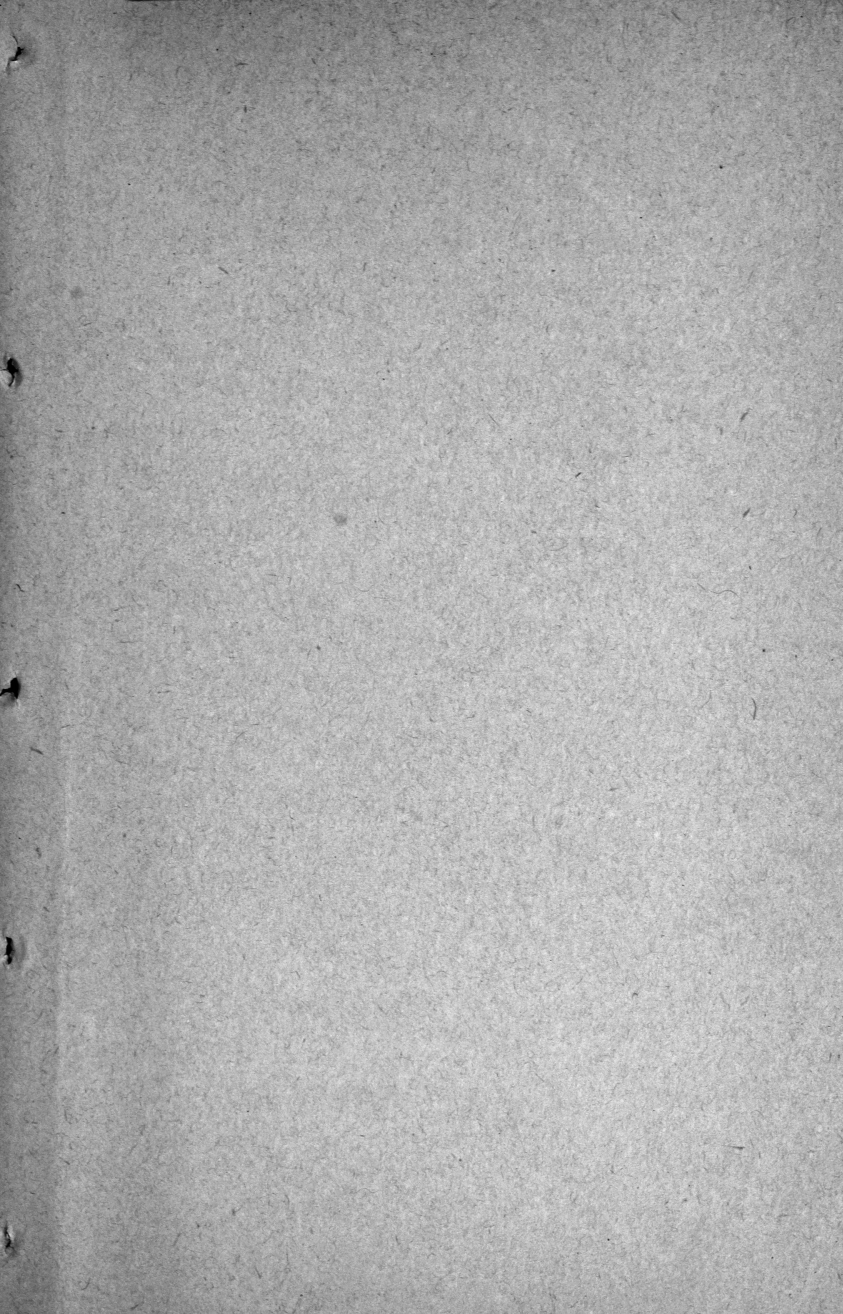
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Yours most sincerely,

WILLIAM WILSON.

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